Minnesota Department of Transportation

2013 MnDOT Library Valuation/Return On Investment (ROI) Study Findings
MnDOT Library undertook a library valuation/return on investment (ROI) study in 2013.

While an abundance of research is available for the ROI of public and academic libraries, practically no valuation studies have been performed on special libraries such as the MnDOT Library. Our study included an extensive literature review, personal interviews with nationally-recognized experts on academic library valuation, and a MnDOT staff survey on library services. The survey was conducted during April 2013; MnDOT staff were encouraged to take the survey, based on their library usage since the 2010 library remodel. Survey results were intentionally anonymous. Of the 4,732 employees at MnDOT at the time, 603 responded to the survey (12.7% response).

Survey results were synthesized along with the library staff’s monthly statistical and narrative reports to produce this summary document. Several areas of improvement were identified, including the need for much more outreach, and instructional videos on library services. Survey findings reveal that library users save time, save money, and receive more complete and reliable information than they could find on their own.

As we worked through the process of determining the library’s value to MnDOT, it became apparent that the library produces two types of ROI: tangible and intangible. The Tangible ROI was calculated from dollars and time saved, and indicated that for every $1.00 spent on library staff and materials, $1.90 in benefits were returned to MnDOT.

Intangible ROI refers to things we cannot measure, such as the value library-supplied standards and specifications bring to MnDOT’s construction projects, or, what is the value of knowledge gained through the reading of materials supplied by the library to MnDOT’s projects, initiatives, and decision-making. Based on customer feedback, the Intangible Value returned to MnDOT is significant.

Thank you for your interest in MnDOT Library’s valuation. Please contact me with any questions or comments.

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The mission of MnDOT Library is to advance knowledge with timely, direct, and cost-effective connections to the information system users need to provide the highest-quality transportation system.
## Time Saved in Dollars (based on actual library statistics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Requests</th>
<th>Value Factor: Average Hours Saved Customer per Request</th>
<th>Customer Average Salary + Benefits per Hour</th>
<th>Cost Savings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth Reference</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>x 16</td>
<td>x $50</td>
<td>= $277,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Reference</td>
<td>1215</td>
<td>x 2</td>
<td>x $50</td>
<td>= $122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Searches</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>x 2</td>
<td>x $50</td>
<td>= $57,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Reference Savings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$456,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Delivery (Requests Filled In-house)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans from MnDOT Library</td>
<td>3,799</td>
<td>x 1</td>
<td>x $50</td>
<td>= $190,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles Downloaded/ Copied</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>x 1</td>
<td>x $50</td>
<td>= $68,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Document Delivery Savings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$258,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Dollars Saved (based on actual library statistics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Titles Borrowed From Other Libraries</th>
<th>Value Factor: Borrowing Instead of Buying</th>
<th>Cost Savings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary Loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>x $55 (Average Cost to Purchase from Vendor)</td>
<td>= $8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Articles Borrowed</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>x $125 (Average Cost of Book + Processing)</td>
<td>= $53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Titles Borrowed</td>
<td>426</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Interlibrary Loan Savings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$61,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Journal Routing Service vs Individual Article Purchase</th>
<th>Value Factor: 3 Articles/Year x $55 (Average Cost to Purchase from Vendor)</th>
<th>Cost Savings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Routing (10,887 Issues)</td>
<td>780 Routeeans</td>
<td>x $165</td>
<td>= $129,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Journal Routing Savings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$129,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Total Cost Savings** | **$904,000** |

### Tangible Savings
- Cost Savings of Reference = $456,000
- Cost Savings of Document Delivery = $258,000
- Cost Savings of Interlibrary Loans = $61,000
- Cost Savings of Journal Routing = $129,000

### Intangible Savings
- Impact that reading information provided by the Library has on MnDOT’s:
  - Projects and initiatives
  - Research
  - Decision making
- Projects on hold until information is received from Library
- Library staff of transportation information experts/trusted agents
- Library public space & WiFi available to Districts, non-CO employees, consultants & others
- Support to MnDOT’s future: graduate engineers & surveyors
- Library’s contribution to professional transportation information organizations
- Library as national and state award winner
- Value to MnDOT’s branding as a transportation leader
- Organized, fully cataloged resources: journals, databases, unique collection
- MnDOT Library website (13,519 unique visitors)

*Numbers rounded to the nearest 100
A Sample of MnDOT Library

**How do other state DOTs and metro planning organizations organize their pedestrian plans?**

**I am looking for any information on pedestrian survivability rates when struck by a vehicle based on vehicle speeds.**

**I need information on the safety aspects of extra tall concrete median barriers.**

**I need information on elevated bicycle roundabouts.**

**What are the safety and traffic impacts of changeable/variable message signs?**

**Can we use ground penetrating radar to measure variations in overlay thickness?**

**We need information on the environmental impact of treated lumber used in noise walls on the environment.**

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**“I do think they’re kind of the hidden gems at MnDOT...”**
Customer In-depth Queries:

- How can we safely accommodate bicycle transportation?
- How do we improve work zone safety?
- Can you find me a list of the major employers along I-35E and I-394 for potential MnPASS marketing?
- What is the economic value of barge traffic to Minnesota?
- How can we do a better job of routing snow plows?
- What are the impacts of bus only shoulders on traffic congestion and safety?
- Which plant toxins of poison ivy and Grecian foxglove are carried through the smoke of prescribed burns?
- We need information on the design and construction of noise walls.

What MnDOT Library Customers Recommend

- I’d like to see a short list of things that MnDOT librarians can do for you that are easier to imagine using. Real world examples. Like, “looking for national examples of xyz? We can help!” Or something like that. Rather than “we have this many magazines.” I think people will use the library more if they can visualize themselves actually using the services for their job.
- Use recommendations of our excellent library staff to help plan for the future
- Much more outreach, outreach to Districts
- Clarify availability of electronic resources
- Information sessions
- Video about library services and online catalog system
- More materials: PE exam, tutorial books on software, legal materials
- Ability to access ASTM Standards online
- A less complicated Library catalog system
- Longer checkout times, improve WiFi access (too many restrictions), better online request form

Partners/Collaborators/ Networks Add Value by Sharing Information Resources and Connecting Experts

- Special Libraries Association Transportation Division
- Transportation Library Connectivity and Development Pooled Fund Study TPF-5 (237)
- Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network
- Minnesota Transportation Libraries
- National Transportation Library
- Special Libraries Association Minnesota Chapter
- Minitex
- OCLC
- MnPALS (Project for Automated Library Systems)
- Capitol Area Library Consortium

We need information on the design and construction of noise walls.

How can we safely accommodate bicycle transportation?

How do we improve work zone safety?

Can you find me a list of the major employers along I-35E and I-394 for potential MnPASS marketing?

What is the economic value of barge traffic to Minnesota?

How can we do a better job of routing snow plows?

What are the impacts of bus only shoulders on traffic congestion and safety?

Which plant toxins of poison ivy and Grecian foxglove are carried through the smoke of prescribed burns?
What Are Your Main Reasons for Using MnDOT Library?

- 51% To do research
- 51% To check out library materials (Ex: books, technical reports, Kindles)
- 37% To ask for a librarian’s help with research
- 32% To have access to magazines and newspapers
- 22% Quiet place for reading, writing, and breaks
- 15% Events (Ex book discussions, open house)
- 12% Free book exchange
- 11% Wi-Fi access
- 8% To use a library computer
- 6% Other (please specify)
- 5% Preparation space for job interview candidates
- 4% Small group meetings

Information Provided by MnDOT Library...

- 71% Helps me in my work
- 68% Saves me time
- 55% Contributes to MnDOT’s use of research-based industry practices
- 50% Helps me strengthen my skills
- 46% Is information that I probably would not have found elsewhere
- 46% Facilitates innovation
- 42% Contributes to transportation projects’ effectiveness
- 41% Contributes to MnDOT’s transparency
- 29% Contributes to transportation system safety
- 24% Contributes to increased mobility in the transportation system
- 20% Informs decisions that decreased projects’ costs

*Multiple responses were allowed
What Services Do Customers Use?*

What Information Resources Do You Need and/or Use in Your Work?

- Handbooks and manuals: 67%
- Data: 55%
- Standards and specifications (Ex: AASHTO, ASTM, MnDOT, etc.): 52%
- MnDOT publications: 43%
- Other state or federal DOT publications: 41%
- Research reports: 34%
- Magazines/Newspapers: 33%
- Historical materials: 31%
- Statistics: 29%
- Exam certification/test prep (Ex: PMBOK, PE, etc.): 16%
- Trade catalogs: 14%
- Other: 10%

Library Services Used by Customers:

- Phone or e-mail the library to get an item from the library: 60%
- Phone or e-mail the library with a question: 57%
- Visit the library to find/borrow resources: 56%
- Visit the library in person with questions: 50%
- Borrow materials from other libraries (Interlibrary loan/ILL): 37%
- Magazine routing service: 37%
- Recommend resources to add to library collection: 25%
- Notifications and research updates in areas of interest (Ex: DIALOG or Google Alerts): 15%

Online Services Used by Customers on MnDOT Library’s Website:

- Library catalog: 44%
- Request materials online: 43%
- MnDOT Library New Library Materials: 36%
- Magazines and journals lists, including full-text access: 34%
- Online databases: 24%
- Used the “Ask a Librarian” feature: 22%
- Links to other resources, forms: 20%

*Multiple responses were allowed.

“The library provides assistance on at least 2/3 of the products I deliver...”
Indicate Your Agreement With the Following Statements:

In general, how would you rate the help you have received from MnDOT Library staff since the library remodel in 2010?

- Very Good & Good: 93%

Service provided by MnDOT Library exceeds my expectations.

- Strongly Agree and Agree: 81%

I would refer colleagues to MnDOT Library to find resources or research assistance for their work.

Who are MnDOT Library Customers?

In which division do you work?

- 35% Operations
- 29% Engineering Services
- 11% Modal Planning & Program Management
- 9% Employee & Corporate Services
- 8% Policy, Safety & Strategic Initiatives
- 5% Commissioner’s Office (Includes Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, Chief Engineer, Transportation Ombudsman, Communications, Customer Relations, Audit, Government Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Counsel, Chief Risk Officer)
- 3% State Aid

In what physical office or district do you work?

- 48% Central Office (Includes Aeronautics, Arden Hills Training Center, Bridge Office, Ft. Snelling, Materials and Road Research, MnROAD, St. Croix River Crossing Office, Traffic Safety & Technology)
- 30% Districts 1-8 (Not including metro)
- 22% Metro District (Includes RTMC, Electronic Communications)

How long have you worked for MnDOT?

- 34% 20 or more years
- 27% 10-19 years
- 24% 2-9 years
- 15% Less than 2 years

Access more information on this study at www.MnDOT.gov/library